United Nations E/CN.5/2019/NGO/32

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
1 November 2018

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Fifty-seventh session
11–21 February 2019
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly Priority Theme: Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

Statement submitted by Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-18386 (E) 091118

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Statement

With regard to the 57th Session of the Commission for Social Development, the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa would like to draw specific attention to the issues faced by African youth in the digital age.

African youth continue to face unemployment, underdevelopment, skills mismatch in labour markets, insufficient education and limited access to capital. These deficits imply that a greater proportion of young Africans do not have the opportunities needed to fully develop their potential and contribute to the realization of the declared vision and mission of African nations.

The Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa performed surveys among its members (several thousands of students from branch universities on the African continent and abroad as well as young professionals) to gauge youth opinion on the state of inclusion, empowerment and satisfaction of Africa's economy, polity and society, and our results confirmed that a majority of youth and young adults do not have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and participate in the local, national and regional strata of African development. We discovered that a) only 26.9% (roughly one-fourth) of students graduating have employment fully secured, b) of those employed, only 46.2% believe school prepared them for their current work, c) of those unemployed, 57.1% have been looking for a job for more than a year and 7.1% for more than 4 years, and d) of those self-employed, 56.5% started their businesses from funding obtained from friends and family, 8.7% from personal savings and 0% from funding sponsored by government or banks.

African nations need deliberate efforts to accelerate social development that gives high priority to youth empowerment and education. Challenges faced by African youth transcend national borders. Since 2004, the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa has sought to provide young people with resources, experience, and life-long skills that contribute to their development and inspire them to make positive change in Africa. Policy makers must implement devices that provide similar solutions. This includes promoting innovative curriculum that promotes critical thinking skills that help in student socio-political development, interpersonal and communication skills, a strong sense of agency, and civic commitment.

To facilitate these aims, the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa is holding its biennial conference "i-Boot Camp" in Rabat, Morocco to help young Africans cultivate the skills and knowledge needed to embrace the opportunity offered by the process of integration through cultural exchange, the generation of ideas, and mentorship.

i-Boot Camp will be held from 24th–28th October 2018 and will engage and empower 350 youth to build viable and sustainable digitally savvy enterprises across African borders in a high intensity and fast-paced environment, thereby enhancing rapid digitization from the bottom-up. The i-Boot Camp will incorporate YALDA's previous i-Boot Camp structures encompassing four key areas: industry specific panel discussions; IDEA labs; workshops focused on refining ideas and refining skills, and site visits to youth-led projects and businesses across Morocco.

As communication is a very vital part of rapid digitization, we want to ensure that all brilliant ideas from all over the continent are shared and that language is not an impediment. All documents and summary presentations will be available in multiple languages. Additionally, YALDA will continue to offer e-participation that we recently offered at the YALDA 2016 i-Boot Camp that was held in Cameroon. This will allow delegates who are unable to travel for whatever reason the chance to

register and participate online through audio live streaming, video streaming, online communications/feedbacks including live feeds on various social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, MindMixers and Vimeo.

First and most importantly, the i-Boot Camp serves as a space for youth to come together to share, develop or expand tangible ideas. Starting with the site visits, young people will learn first-hand what it takes to use technology in a beneficial way and learn about the challenges young people like them have faced and how they translated these into successful initiatives. The following days of the i-Boot Camp will be filled with activities that allow the delegates to share and refine their distinctive ideas within a very short time frame on a very demanding schedule with required daily written assignments that are expected to be completed before registration for the following days activities. Additionally, the various workshops and seminars will give youth the avenues and direct them to resources to bring their ideas to fruition in their respective countries and beyond.

Delegates will be given an opportunity to then present unique ideas to industry experts for constructive feedback during the industry panel sessions, in which they will also receive further leads for more support in the idea implementation stage. The industry specific panel sessions will not only educate participants on opportunities arising from technology in various sectors but will also sensitize youth on the stakes involved when it comes to their specific industries potential that can be unleashed. Some of the best ideas/initiatives under the respective panels will be rewarded with a sponsorship package to kick-start the initiative in the community of the winner while promoting the very theme of the i-Boot Camp. Through these many sessions, delegates will have an opportunity to network with Africa's leading professionals across various sectors and build relationships with their peers from different countries. In turn, this will enable delegates to build expansive knowledge sharing networks in order to leverage Africa's rapid digitization and position delegates for success in and beyond their home countries.

Undoubtedly, at YALDA we believe the crux of this i-Boot Camp is to enable young Africans to take advantage of the rapid digitization occurring all over the continent and ultimately, to have an Africa developed by Africans. Creating awareness is the strongest foundation for prosperity. Thus, by sharing lessons from past experiences and developing enterprises to address the technological advancements that are being made and can be made in the future, young people will be instrumental in strengthening digital development and synchronizing efforts for a technologically integrated Africa thereby contributing to the prosperity of our African continent.